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PATENT

Docket No. YO8-1999-0764 (1963-4916)

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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UTILITY APPLICATION AND FEE TRANSMITTAL (1.53(b))

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
Box Patent Application
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

Transmitted herewith for filing is the patent application of

First named Inventors
or Application Identifiers: Paul Moskowitz, Philip S. Yu,
Stephen J. Boies, and Sam Dinkin

For: SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR A FEE ADDRESS SYSTEM

Enclosed are:

☒ 21 page(s) of specification, Abstract, 10 page(s) of claims 1-67

☒ 6 sheets of drawing (Figs. 1-6 ☐ formal ☒ informal

☐ ___ page(s) of Declaration and Power of Attorney

☐ Unsigned

☐ Newly Executed

☐ Copy from prior application

☐ Deletion of inventors including Signed Statement under 37 C.F.R. § 1.63(d)(2)

☐ Incorporation by Reference: The entire disclosure of the prior application, from which a copy of the combined declaration and power of attorney is supplied herein, is considered as being part of the disclosure of the accompanying application and is incorporated herein by reference.

☐ Microfiche Computer Program (Appendix)

☐ ___ page(s) of Sequence Listing

☐ computer readable disk containing Sequence Listing

☐ Statement under 37 C.F.R. § 1.821(f) that computer and paper copies of the Sequence Listing are the same

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JC600 U.S. PTO

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- ☐ Certified copy of Priority Document(s)
- ☐ English translation documents
- ☐ Information Disclosure Statement
- ☐ Copy of ___ cited references
- ☐ PTO-1449.
- ☐ Preliminary Amendment
- ☒ Return receipt postcard (MPEP 503)
- ☐ Assignment Papers (assignment cover sheet and assignment documents)
- ☐ A check in the amount of \$40.00 for recording the Assignment.
- ☐ Assignment papers filed in parent application Serial No. _____.
- ☐ Certification of chain of title pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 3.73(b).
- ☐ This is a ☐ continuation ☐ divisional ☐ continuation-in-part (C-I-P) of prior application serial no. _____.
- ☐ Cancel in this application original claims _____ of the parent application before calculating the filing fee. (At least one original independent claim must be retained for filing purposes.)
- ☐ A Preliminary Amendment is enclosed. (Claims added by this Amendment have been properly numbered consecutively beginning with the number following the highest numbered original claim in the prior application.
- ☐ The status of the parent application is as follows:
- ☐ A Petition For Extension of Time and a Fee therefor has been or is being filed in the parent application to extend the term for action in the parent application until _____.
- ☐ A copy of the Petition for Extension of Time in the co-pending parent application is attached.
- ☐ No Petition For Extension of Time and Fee therefor are necessary in the co-pending parent application.
- ☐ Please abandon the parent application at a time while the parent application is pending or at a time when the petition for extension of time in that application is granted and while this application is pending has been granted a filing date, so as to make this application co-pending.
- ☐ Transfer the drawing(s) from the parent application to this application.
- ☐ Amend the specification by inserting before the first line the sentence:
This is a ☐ continuation ☐ divisional ☐ continuation-in-part of co-pending application Serial No. _____, filed _____.

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I. CALCULATION OF APPLICATION FEE

| | | | | | | Basic Fee |
|---------------------------|------------------------|------|--------------|---|---------|-------------|
| | Number Filed | | Number Extra | | Rate | \$ 690.00 |
| Total Claims | 67 | -20= | 47 | x | \$18.00 | \$ 846.00 |
| Independent Claims | 6 | - 3= | 3 | x | \$78.00 | \$ 234.00 |
| Multiple Dependent Claims | | | | | | |
| | [] yes Additional fee | | =\$260.00 | | | \$ |
| | [X] no Additional fee | | =NONE | | | \$ |
| | | | | | | |
| Total: | | | | | | \$ 1,770.00 |

- [] A statement claiming small entity status is attached or has been filed in the above-identified parent application and its benefit under 37 C.F.R. § 1.28(a) is hereby claimed. Reduced fees under 37 C.F.R. § 1.9(F) (50% of total) paid herewith \$_____.
- [X] A check in the amount of \$ 1,770.00 in payment of the application filing fees is attached.
- [] Charge Fee(s) to Deposit Account No. 13-4500. Order No. _____. A DUPLICATE COPY OF THIS SHEET IS ATTACHED.
- [X] The Assistant Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required for filing this application, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 13-4500, Order No. 1963-4916. A DUPLICATE COPY OF THIS SHEET IS ATTACHED.

Respectfully submitted,

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PATENT

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Serial No. : To Be Assigned Group Art Unit: To Be Assigned

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For : SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR A FEE ADDRESS SYSTEM

EXPRESS MAIL CERTIFICATE

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Date of Deposit April 4, 2000

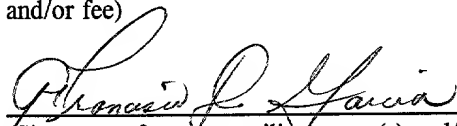
I hereby certify that the following attached paper(s) and/or fee

1. Utility Application and Fee Transmittal (1.53(b)) with filing fee in the amount of \$1770.00;
2. Patent Application (21 pages of specification; 1 page of abstract; 10 pages of claims 1-67 and 6 sheets of informal drawings, Figs. 1-6); and
3. Return postcard.

is being deposited with the United States Postal Service "Express Mail Post Office to Addressee" service under 37 C.F.R. §1.10 on the date indicated above and is addressed to the Assistant Commissioner for Patents, Washington, D.C. 20231, Attn: Box Patent Application.

Francisco J. Garcia

(Typed or printed name of person mailing paper(s) and/or fee)


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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

U.S. PATENT APPLICATION

FOR:

SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR A FEE ADDRESS SYSTEM

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SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR A FEE ADDRESS SYSTEM

FIELD OF INVENTION

This invention relates to the field of address systems and provides a method for limiting access to an
5 address by charging a fee to send mail to that address.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Addresses are critical to personal and business communications. Generally, addresses are the numbers and letters which define where an addressee lives, works and
10 can be contacted, either physically or electronically. In today's environment, addresses include, for example, street addresses, telephone, fax and pager numbers, e-mail and e-phone addresses. These addresses provide highly personal information about an addressee.

15 There is a need in the art to control the extent and number of unsolicited messages flowing to these addresses. In the art, several methods have been described. Many of these are content based filters, which examine the content of the message in order to determine
20 what action to take. Some systems prioritize mail based upon stored rules, either set by the computer program or designed and input by the user.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

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The prior techniques, however, do not discourage the sender from sending useless messages, but rather put the burden on the recipient to filter messages. Some
5 mechanism is needed to discourage the sender from bombarding recipients with excessive or very large pieces of mail. The present system relates to charging a fee for a piece of mail capable of being processed through a central processing system. Charging a fee to send a piece
10 of mail will dramatically cut down on the amount of junk mail received each day.

The present system relates to a system and method for providing a fee address capable of monitoring information sent and asynchronously received to a fee
15 address, determining a fee for the information or mail wherein the fee is based on a preferences record defined by a mail recipient, collecting the fee, and forwarding the information to a private address. The fees may be fixed, or may vary depending upon the size, content or urgency of
20 the mail, or the fee may be conditional on the recipient's determination of an appropriate fee or the recipient's response. The fees can profit the recipient or, alternatively, a third party, such as for example, a

company, firm individual or charity. The fees can be settled by any consideration.

A programmed computer for providing a fee address system comprising a memory having at least one region for storing computer executable program code and a processor for executing the program stored in the memory is also described. Further, computer executable software code stored on a computer readable media is provided.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

Figures 1 and 2 are hardware diagrams of representative systems.

Figure 3 is a flowchart illustrating an embodiment of the system.

Figure 4 is a flowchart illustrating the set up procedure.

Figure 5 is a hardware diagram of a representative system.

Figure 6 is a representative database of the system.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The system described is directed to a technique for limiting access to an address through the charging of

fees for mail. The address can be associated with any communication means capable of being processed through a central processing system. Fees can be charged based upon any parameter, including for example, by urgency, size, frequency, address or person. The fee address system comprises associating a fee with a particular piece of mail and a central processing system. The fee may be fixed, variable or conditional and may be settled by the sender with some form of consideration. The preferred settlement method is electronic check.

The central processing system of the present system involves receiving, storing and delivering messages associated with an address, and preferably comprises a computer server or computer servers, preferably connected through a network e.g. the Internet. A system and method for receiving, storing and delivering messages involves receiving an incoming signal, such as an email signal or a call and detecting public information (e.g. address) associated with the incoming signal or call, the address signal being associated with a recipient. The central processing system comprises a means for receiving an incoming signal or call, detecting an address signal on the incoming signal or call, determining the fee to be charged

to that incoming message or call and determining whether
payment has been made, or payment can be made upon fee
determination, based upon some consideration, such as, for
example, electronic check, e-money or credit card. After
5 payment is completed, the central processing system then
correlates the address provided with a private address and
forwards the paid-for message to this private address.
Preferably, the central processing system can receive one
or more of facsimile, data or telephone addresses and data
10 or email addresses.

In order to maintain the privacy of the user's
personal account, the mail is initially sent to a public
box. The fee address preferably uses symmetric key or
public key cryptography such as, for example, RSA
15 encryption to protect the private mailbox address. A 4096
bit encryption system is preferred. PGP technology or
other industry standard methods may be preferably used to
implement the RSA encryption. Encryption prevents others
from tampering with the mail while it is in transit. An
20 anonymous remailer system may be used to provide additional
security for maintaining the privacy of the user's private
mailbox. Methods are also available to verify an

authenticated sender. These may be used to further secure privacy.

The present system is applicable to any type of address amenable to funneling through a central processing system or distribution system. "Address" as the term is used herein is defined as any set of numbers, letters, images, symbols or signals that direct a message or mail to a recipient. Examples of addresses include a mailing address, a telephone number, a facsimile number, a pager number, an electronic mail (i.e., email) address, video mail and electronic telephone (i.e., e-phone) address. Identification pin numbers are also a form of address. One skilled in the art will recognize many other forms of addresses amenable to use in the present system. "Mail" or "information" as those terms are used herein refers to the subject matter attached to and sent to a particular address.

"Currency" or "consideration" as these terms are used herein is any form of value that can be exchanged so that messages or mail can be successfully sent to a recipient. Common examples of value are money, checks and debit cards. Credit cards are also a form of value in that a charge can be assessed against the sender to pay for

nature of the unpaid fee and the need to associate payment with the mail before transmission of the mail can be completed.

The fees may be fixed, varied or conditional.

- 5 The recipient may charge any fee he or she deems appropriate. Any value may be attached to a piece a mail, depending upon the parameters defined by the recipient of the mail. Fees may, for example, impose an indirect limit to the number of times an address can be accessed by
- 10 associating a sender with an escalating fee schedule. Alternatively, fees may be based upon the size or weight of the mail, or on the address or person sending the mail. If the fee is based upon the size or weight of the mail, this parameter may be measured, for example, by word count or in
- 15 bits. Fees may be based upon the urgency of the mail and just how quickly the sender would like to have his or her message read. Alternatively, fees may be fixed at a particular price, regardless of the type, size or sender of the mail. Fees may also be waived for certain senders.
- 20 When the fee is based upon a usage number, each time a piece of mail is received in the central processing system, the system will, for example, add one to the total usage number, thereby updating the usages for the sender and

increasing the fee for the next piece of mail to be received from that sender.

Alternatively, the fee may be based upon time; i.e. an address may only be accessed for a given fee, be it
5 fixed or variable for X number of days, weeks or months.
In this embodiment, the central system will charge a given fee for a set time period which may be started for example by the sender's first usage of the address or by a period of time set by the recipient.

10 Yet another type of fee may be a conditional fee.
For example, a fee based upon the content of the mail or the urgency with which the recipient is requested to read the mail may have conditional fees associated with the mail. In this embodiment, the recipient may receive a mail
15 and either before or after the recipient has opened the mail, the recipient determines the appropriate price for the mail. Any further analysis of the mail and/or response to the mail is dependent upon the receipt of payment of the assessed fee. In this embodiment, it may be preferred to
20 substitute the mail recipient for the preferences record.
In other words, the mail is forwarded directly to the mail recipient for determination of the appropriate fee. The

fee is charged and once payment is made the mail recipient analyzes the mail and may optionally respond to it.

The fee charging parameters are defined by the mail recipient and are stored in a preferences record.

5 This record is referenced each time a piece of mail is received and a fee determination is made. The central processing system reads the preferences record to determine whether the fee is flat, variable or conditional. If the fee is flat for some senders, then the central processing
10 system identifies the sender of the mail, to determine if the rate is flat for this particular sender. If the fee is flat for all mail or for the particular sender, the central processing system refers to the preferences record to determine the amount to charge. If the fee is variable
15 depending upon size, the central processing system determines the size of the mail. Based upon this determination, the central processing system refers to the preferences record to determine the cost of the mail. If the sender is on the list of addresses for whom the fee is
20 waived, as recorded in the preferences record, then the central processing system recognizes this mail as already paid-for and directly forwards it to the recipient's private mailbox. If the mail has an "urgent" notice or is

a "priority" mailing, the preferences record is queried as to whether an additional charge is associated with such mail. The preferences record can be accessed by the fee address owner and the preferences may be changed or updated
5 as desired.

Once the mail recipient receives a paid-for piece of mail, the system provides a mechanism to refund the fee at the mail recipient's option. It may be the case that a particular piece of mail was charged a fee as defined by
10 the preferences record, but after consideration by the recipient, he or she determines the fee was not desired, i.e. the mail came from a friend, for example. The refund feature allows the recipient to reverse the charge and give the sender a fee refund.

15 The money collected from the fees can be distributed in a number of ways. It may be desired that the recipient of the mail receive the collected fees. Alternatively, the collected fees may be donated to one or more charities. The collected fees may also be given to a
20 firm, company or other third party. The transfer of collected fees is preferably mediated through a bank or collecting agency. The mail recipient preferably sets up an account to receive collected fees. This account

collects fees, and then forwards these fees to the party or parties identified by the mail recipient to receive the funds. Alternatively, the fee address provider may provide an account for the general collection of fees, which it
5 then transfers to the accounts identified by the mail recipient to receive the funds.

With reference to the several views of the drawings, there are depicted several embodiments of the fee address system, described hereinbelow.

10 As shown in Figure 1, a general central processing system preferably includes a central processing unit (CPU) **240**, random access memory (RAM) **220**, read-only memory (ROM) **230** and large capacity storage device **250**. Optionally, a calendar and/or clock may be included to
15 track time. CPU preferably comprises a conventional microprocessor such as an Intel Pentium Processor and is electronically coupled to each of the central controller's other elements.

The CPU executes program code stored in one or
20 more of RAM, ROM and storage device to carry out the functions and acts described in connection with the central processing system. The CPU preferably comprises at least one high-speed digital data processor adequate to execute

program modules for determining fees to be charged,
transacting payment and forwarding mail to private
addresses. These modules are described, for example, in
connection with Figures 3 and 4. The CPU interacts with
5 RAM, ROM and storage device to execute stored program code
according to conventional data processing techniques.

User interface devices comprise devices for
allowing the central processing system to communicate with
senders and recipients using fee addresses, e.g. a computer
10 or telephone. Figure 2 illustrates this system. The user
terminal, 22 communicates with a server, 24 which receives
the mail associated with the fee address into a public
mailbox, 26. Next, a toll determination is made, 28, as to
if a fee is to be charged and if so, the cost of the mail
15 based upon its size, address and any other parameters
recorded in the recipient's stored preferences record, 32.
If the toll is satisfied, the mail is forwarded to a
private address, 34. This private address may be located
in a separate server, 32 as illustrated in Figure 2 or may
20 be part of the first server, 24. The paid mail is then
forwarded to the recipient's terminal, 36. If no payment
is received, the message/mail associated with the fee

address is moved to the discard bin, **30**. Alternatively,
the denied mail may be returned to the user terminal, **22**.

In one embodiment of the system shown in Figure
3, a fee address is used to send a piece of mail. The mail
5 is received in a public mailbox, **40**. The central
processing system then uploads the stored preferences
record, **44**, in order to determine the appropriate fee for
the received mail, **42**. Fee determination is primarily
concerned with at least one of the following: the type of
10 mail, the sender's address, the size of the mail or the
frequency or urgency of the mail. Other similar parameters
will be known to the skilled artisan and are included in
the present system. The fee determination is preferably
based upon the preferences provided by the recipient. Once
15 the appropriate fee is determined, the fee is charged, **46**.
If the mail is prepaid, the fee is received, **48**, and
transferred into a general account, **52**. Prepaid mail may
have a stamp attached to it or may contain credit card or
debit card information. Prepaid mail may also use e-money
20 or some other form of instantly redeemable currency. A
general account is provided by the mail recipient or
through the fee address provider at the time the fee
address is set up (see Figure 4, described below). This

general account may be a bank account or some similar
account capable of receiving, maintaining and distributing
funds. If the mail is not prepaid, the mail is forwarded
to a discard bin, **50**. Alternatively, this rejected mail
5 may be returned to the sender. The receipt of the fee also
triggers the central processing system to forward the mail
to a private mail box, **54**, where it can be accessed by the
recipient. The collected fees in the general account may
be transferred to a third party's account, **56**, if the
10 recipient has designated a third party to receive the
proceeds from the fee address.

Figure 4 illustrates one embodiment of a set up
protocol. In this embodiment, an eventual recipient of
mail wishes to obtain a fee address for his or her mail.
15 The recipient can register the necessary information
through a computer network. Preferably, this computer
network is the internet. In order to register, general
registration information is requested, **60**. Such
information may include, for example, the registrant's name
20 and address. Other forms of communication, such as
telephone or fax numbers may also be requested in the
general registration section. Next, the registrant is
provided with a log-in password, **62**. This password is

provided to protect the registrant's privacy and the security of the account. Once the registrant has logged-in, the system may request the mail recipient's bank account information, **64**. This account may act as the
5 general account for accepting fees from charged mail. This general account may be associated with a traditional bank or alternatively, may be associated with some other collection agency capable of collecting, maintaining and transferring funds. Alternatively, the provider of the fee
10 address may provide a general account for collected fees, in which case, the mail recipient's account information is only necessary if the mail recipient designates himself as the (or one of the) funds recipients.

In any case, the system then prompts the
15 registrant to provide the parameters for charging fees for mail, **66**. For example, the registrant may indicate a flat fee of \$0.35 is to be charged for mail regardless of size or sender. A different registrant may indicate that the fee is to be based upon size and mail less than a given
20 size is to be charged X, but mail greater than or equal to this given size is to be charged 2X. X may be any amount of money or currency. Yet another registrant may indicate that all mail is to be charged \$1 if the sender wishes the

mail to be opened today, but is charged \$0.50 if the sender has a lesser priority, i.e. the mail can be read tomorrow or some time in the future. Also, a registrant may indicate a wish to waive the fee for mail from a particular sender, or in the alternative, may waive charges for all but certain addressees. These parameters may vary from sender to sender, i.e. what may be fixed for certain senders, may be variable depending upon size, for example, for a different set of senders. Different combinations of parameters may be set by certain registrants.

In any case, once the fee parameters have been registered, the registrant is prompted to indicate whether the received funds from collected fees are to be held in the general account or forwarded to one or more third party accounts. If a third party account is indicated, the registrant is prompted to provide the third party's name and account information, 68. For example, it may be necessary to identify the name of the institution where the account is located and the account number. Such institution may be a bank or some similar institution capable of receiving funds. Finally, the system provides the registrant with a fee address, 70, which is used to send mail to the registrant for a fee.

Figure 5 illustrates the system through the use of multiple servers. The system may employ multiple servers or may conduct the various functions of the system through one central server. In Figure 5, the mail is transferred from the user's terminal, 80, to a first server, 82, which determines the fee or toll to be charged for that piece of mail, 84. Once the fee is charged and received, the mail is forwarded to a second server, 90, while the fee collected from the mail is transferred to a third server, 86. The second server receives the mail and places it into a private mailbox, which can be accessed by the recipient, 92. The third server receives the funds collected from the mail fee and places it in a general account, 88. This general account may be directly accessible to the mail recipient, so that if the mail recipient is also the funds recipient, no further transfer of the funds may be necessary. Alternatively, the general account may be associated with the provider of the fee address. In this case, a transfer from the general account to the mail recipient's account may be necessary, 92. If a charity organization has been designated as a funds recipient, the collected funds are transferred from the general account to the charity's account, 94. Similarly,

if a company, 98, or a firm, 96, or other third party, 100, have been designated funds recipients, the collected funds are transferred to the designated accounts.

The large capacity storage device 250 described in Figure 1 includes a transaction processor 260. The transaction processor maintains, determines and accesses the preferences records, determines fees associated with particular pieces of mail, and correlates the payment of the fee with transfer of the mail to private addresses. The transaction processor may comprise one or more separate, conventional CPU/microprocessor(s) or a portion of the operating function of the CPU.

A sample of the contents of a database for one embodiment of the present system is shown in Figure 6. The specific data and fields illustrated in this figure are for the most part self-explanatory. It is understood that the data and fields, as well as the number of databases, can be readily modified from the exemplary embodiment and may be adapted to provide variations for operating the system and method described. Furthermore, each field may contain more or less information. For example, the general account information may only be required if the provider of the fee address does not operate a suitable accounting system, or

if the recipient designates himself to receive the collected fees.

Figure 6 illustrates a sample database containing the entries of several registrants of the present system.

5 This example database contains fields corresponding to the user's name, **100**, the user's account number, **102**, the preferences record, **104**, the distribution schedule for collected fees, **106**, a general account name, **108**, and number, **110**, the name of the recipient(s) of the collected
10 fees, **112**, and the account name and number, **114** for the collected fees. The general account information is used primarily in two situations; (1) if the provider of the fee address does not provide a general account for the collection of fees; and/or (2) if the mail recipient is
15 also the collected fees recipient. In these two situations, general account information may be desirable. In the first instance, the general account forms the initial depository for collected fees. In the second situation, the general account is preferably the final
20 destination of the funds. It may also be the case that the general account is both the initial depository and the final destination of the funds. When a mail recipient designates himself to collect a portion of the collected

fees, it may be desirable to provide separate account information for storing that portion of the collected fees.

5 The above description of various preferred embodiments has been presented for purposes of illustration and description. It is not intended to be exhaustive or limiting to the precise forms disclosed. Obvious modifications or variations are possible in light of the above teachings. The embodiments discussed were chosen and described to provide illustrations and its practical application to thereby enable one of ordinary skill in the art to utilize the various embodiments and with various modifications as are suited to the particular use contemplated. All such modifications and variations are within the system as determined by the appended claims when interpreted in accordance with the breadth to which they are fairly, legally and equitably entitled.

CLAIMS

1 1. An address system comprising:
2 means for monitoring information sent and
3 asychronously received to a fee address;
4 means for determining a fee for the information,
5 wherein the fee is based upon a preferences record defined by a
6 mail recipient;
7 means for collecting the fee into a first account;
8 means for forwarding the information to a private
9 address; and
10 means for transferring the collected fees to a second
11 account.

1 2. The address system of claim 1, wherein the second
2 account belongs to a third party.

1 3. The address system of claim 1, wherein the address is
2 an electronic mail address.

1 4. The address system of claim 1, wherein the fees are
2 escalating based upon number of usages.

1 5. The address system of claim 1, wherein the fees are
2 conditional.

1 6. The address system of claim 1, wherein the fees are a
2 combination of fixed, variable and conditional for different
3 senders.

1 7. The address system of claim 1 wherein the fee is
2 waived for a sender.

1 8. The address system of claim 1 wherein the fee is based
2 upon the urgency of the information.

1 9. The address system of claim 1 wherein the fees are
2 selected from the group consisting of fixed, variable or
3 conditional.

1 10. The address system of claim 1 wherein the fee is based
2 on the size of the information.

1 11. The address system of claim 2 wherein the third party
2 is a charity organization.

1 12. The address system of claim 2 wherein the third party
2 is a company.

1 13. The address system of claim 2 wherein the third party
2 is an individual.

1 14. The address system of claim 2 wherein the third party
2 is a firm.

1 15. The address system of claim 1 wherein the fee varies
2 for different senders.

1 16. The address system of claim 10 wherein the size of the
2 information is based on word count.

1 17. The address system of claim 10 wherein the size of the
2 information is based on number of bits.

1 18. The address system of claim 5 wherein the mail
2 recipient elects to impose a fee.

1 19. An address system comprising:
2 means for monitoring information sent and
3 asynchronously received to a fee address;
4 means for determining a fee for the information,
5 wherein the fee is based upon a preferences record defined by a
6 mail recipient and the fee is conditional;
7 means for collecting the fee; and
8 means for forwarding the information to a private
9 address.

1 20. The address system of claim 19 wherein a mail
2 recipient elects to impose a charge.

1 21. The address system of claim 19 wherein the mail
2 recipient receives a portion of the collected fees.

1 22. A method of providing a fee address system comprising
2 the steps of:

3 receiving information to a fee address in a computer;
4 determining a fee for the information, wherein the fee
5 is based upon a preferences record defined by a mail recipient
6 and the fee increases as information size increases;
7 collecting the fee; and
8 forwarding the information to a private address.

1 23. The method of claim 22 wherein the mail size is
2 measured by word count.

1 24. The method of claim 22 wherein the mail size is
2 measured in bits.

1 25. The method of claim 22 further comprising transferring
2 the collected fees to a third party.

1 26. The method of claim 25 wherein the third party is a
2 charity.

1 27. The method of claim 25 wherein the third party is a
2 firm.

1 28. The method of claim 25 wherein the third party is an
2 individual.

1 29. The method of claim 25 wherein the third party is a
2 company.

1 30. The method of claim 22 wherein the information is
2 electronic mail.

1 31. A programmed computer for providing a fee address
2 system comprising:

3 a memory having at least one region for storing
4 computer executable program code; and

5 a processor for executing the program code stored in
6 memory, wherein the program code includes:

7 code to receive mail having a fee address;

8 code to determine a fee for the mail, wherein the fee
9 is based upon a preferences record defined by a mail recipient;

10 code to collect the fee into a first account;

11 code to forward the mail to a private address; and
12 code to transfer the collected fees to a second
13 account.

1 32. The programmed computer of claim 31 wherein the second
2 account belongs to a third party.

1 33. The programmed computer of claim 31, wherein the
2 address is an electronic mail address.

1 34. The programmed computer of claim 31, wherein the fees
2 are escalating based upon number of usages.

1 35. The programmed computer of claim 31, wherein the fees
2 are conditional.

1 36. The programmed computer of claim 31, wherein the fees
2 are a combination of fixed, variable and conditional for
3 different senders.

1 37. The programmed computer of claim 31 wherein the fee is
2 waived for a sender.

1 38. The programmed computer of claim 31 wherein the fee is
2 based upon the urgency of the mail.

1 39. The programmed computer of claim 31 wherein the fees
2 are selected from the group consisting of fixed, variable or
3 conditional.

1 40. The programmed computer of claim 31 wherein the fee is
2 based on the size of the mail.

1 41. The programmed computer of claim 32 wherein the third
2 party is a charity organization.

1 42. The programmed computer of claim 32 wherein the third
2 party is a company.

1 43. The programmed computer of claim 32 wherein the third
2 party is an individual.

1 44. The programmed computer of claim 32 wherein the third
2 party is a firm.

1 45. The programmed computer of claim 31 wherein the fee
2 varies for different senders.

1 46. The programmed computer of claim 40 wherein the size
2 of the mail is based on word count.

1 47. The programmed computer of claim 40 wherein the size
2 of the mail is based on number of bits.

1 48. The programmed computer of claim 35 wherein the mail
2 recipient elects to impose a fee.

1 49. Computer executable software code stored on a computer
2 readable medium, the code for providing a fee address system,
3 comprising:

code to receive a communication having a fee address;

code to determine a fee for the communication, wherein
the fee is based upon a preferences record defined by a mail
recipient;

code to collect the fee; and

code to forward the communication to a private
address.

1 50. A method of providing a fee address system comprising
2 the steps of:

3 receiving mail having a fee address in a computer;

4 determining a fee for the mail, wherein the fee is
5 based upon a preferences record defined by a mail recipient;

6 collecting the fee into a first account;

7 forwarding the mail to a private address; and

8 transferring the collected fee to a second account.

1 51. The method of claim 50, wherein the second account
2 belongs to a third party.

1 52. The method of claim 50, wherein the address is an
2 electronic mail address.

1 53. The method of claim 50, wherein the fees are
2 escalating based upon number of usages.

1 54. The method of claim 50, wherein the fees are
2 conditional.

1 55. The method of claim 50, wherein the fees are a
2 combination of fixed, variable and conditional for different
senders.

1 56. The method of claim 50 wherein the fee is waived for a
2 sender.

1 57. The method of claim 50 wherein the fee is based upon
2 the urgency of the mail.

1 58. The method of claim 50 wherein the fees are selected
2 from the group consisting of fixed, variable or conditional.

1 59. The method of claim 50 wherein the fee is based on the
2 size of the mail.

1 60. The method of claim 51 wherein the third party is a
2 charity organization.

1 61. The method of claim 51 wherein the third party is a
2 company.

1 62. The method of claim 51 wherein the third party is an
2 individual.

1 63. The method of claim 51 wherein the third party is a
2 firm.

1 64. The method of claim 50 wherein the fee varies for
2 different senders.

1 65. The method of claim 59 wherein the size of the mail is
2 based on word count.

1 66. The method of claim 59 wherein the size of the mail is
2 based on number of bits.

1 67. The method of claim 54 wherein the mail recipient
2 elects to impose a fee.

SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR A FEE ADDRESS SYSTEM

ABSTRACT

A system relating to a fee address is described. A method of directing mail to a public mailbox, determining a fee based upon the preferences of the mail recipient, receiving the fee and forwarding the mail to a private mailbox is also provided. Many different types of addresses can be employed, including for example, email, telephone, facsimile, pager, zip code and identification pin numbers. Fees may be determined by person, size, time or urgency.

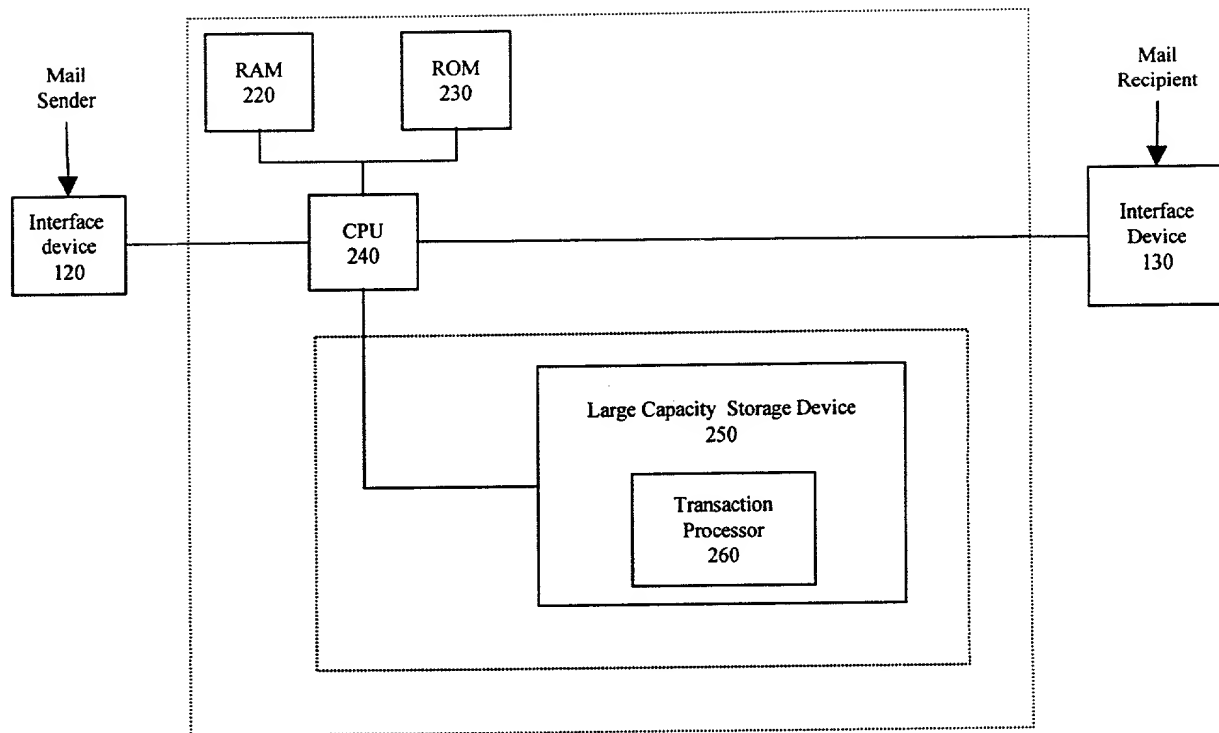


FIG. 1

```

graph TD
    UT[USER TERMINAL 22] --> S24[SERVER 24]
    subgraph S24 [SERVER 24]
        PM[PUBLIC MAILBOX 26] --> FDM{FEE DETERMINATION MADE 28}
        PR[(Preferences Record 32)] --> FDM
    end
    FDM -- "If not prepaid" --> DB[(DISCARD BIN 30)]
    FDM -- "Fee satisfied if prepaid or waived" --> S32[SERVER 32]
    subgraph S32 [SERVER 32]
        PRM[PRIVATE MAILBOX 34]
    end
    S32 --> RT[RECIPIENT TERMINAL 36]
    DB --> UT

```

FIG. 2

```

graph TD
    40[Receive Mail in Public Box  
40] --> 44[Upload Preferences Record  
44]
    44 --> 42[Determine Fee  
42]
    42 --> 46[Charge Fee  
46]
    46 --> 48{Receive Fee  
48}
    48 -- No --> 50[(Discard  
50)]
    48 -- Yes --> 54[Transfer Mail to Private Box  
54]
    54 --> 52[Transfer Collected Fee  
to General Account  
52]
    52 --> 56[Transfer Collected Fee to  
Third Party's Account  
56]
    50 --> 50R[Return  
to sender]
    style 50R fill:none,stroke:none

```

FIG. 3

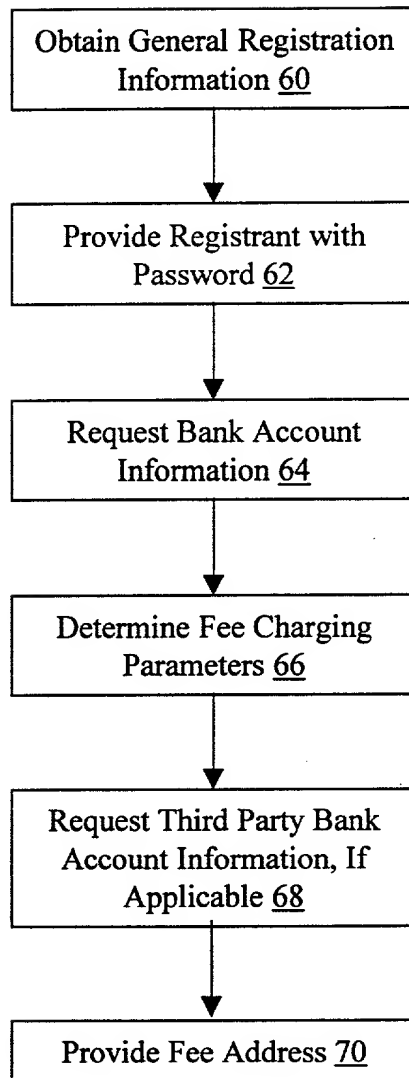


FIG. 4

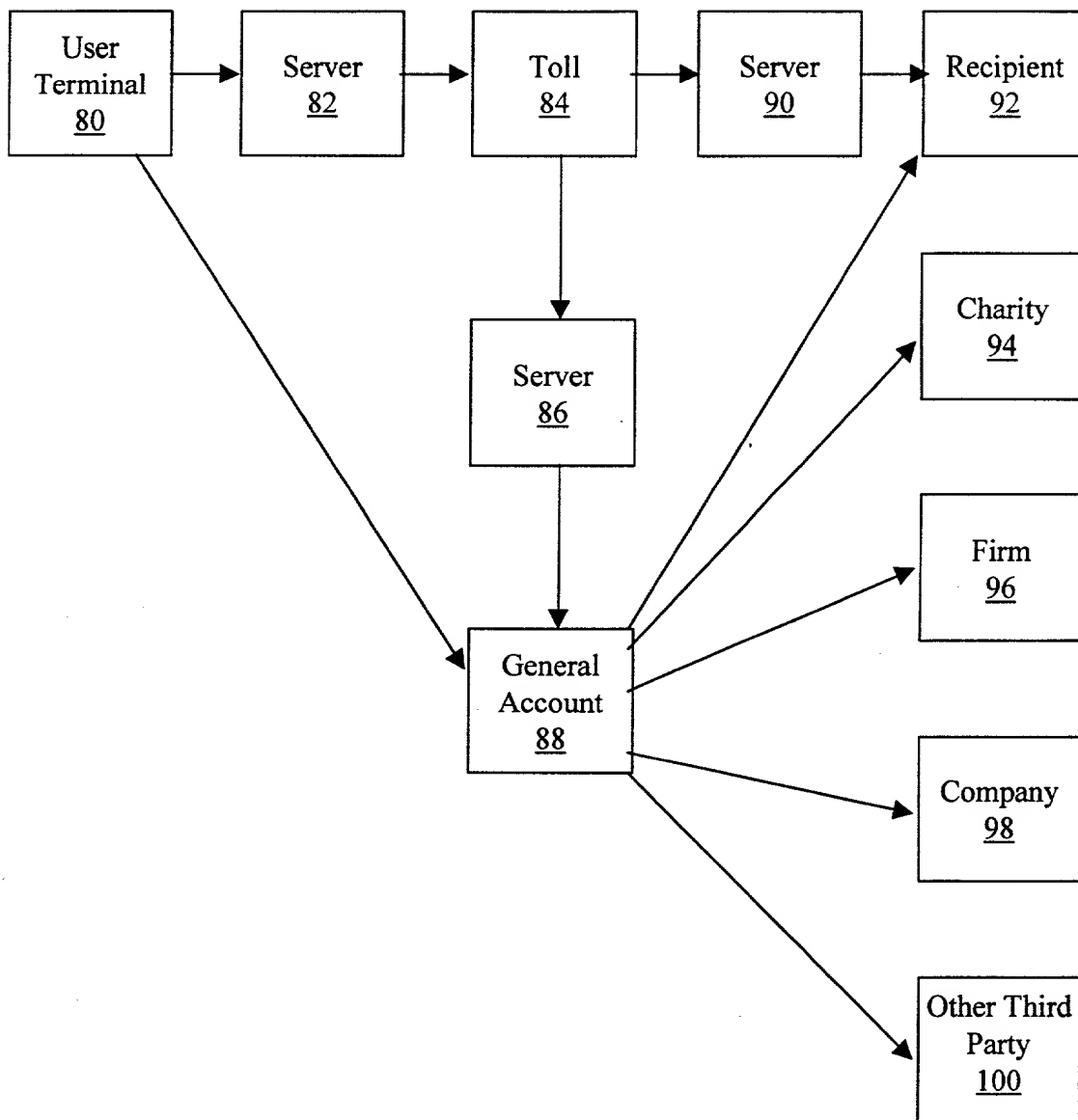


FIG. 5

| User <u>100</u> | Account # <u>102</u> | Preferences Record <u>104</u> | Distribution of Collected Fees <u>106</u> | General Account Institute Name <u>108</u> | Account # <u>110</u> | Recipient of Collected Fees <u>112</u> | Account # <u>114</u> |
|--------------------|-------------------------|---|---|---|-------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Joe Com | 12345 | All mail \$0.35 | 100% to Charity A | 1 st Bank | XXX | Charity A | 00015 |
| Dot Net | 67890 | Mail < 0.1 Mbits = \$0.35 Mail > 0.1 Mbit = \$1 Mail > 1 Mbit = \$5 | 50% to Charity B 50% to Company X | 2 nd Bank | YYY | Charity B Company X | 00016 33360 |
| Sam Edu | 05678 | Mail from X = \$5/piece All other mail = \$0.35/piece | 50% to Firm A 50% to Sam Edu | 3 rd Bank | BBB | Firm A Sam Edu | 44325 |

FIG. 6